



Michigan Juvenile Detention Association, Inc.

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WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF MATTHEW KALEY
PRESIDENT, MICHIGAN JUVENILE DETENTION ASSOCIATION
MICHIGAN STATE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
REPRESENTATIVE MARK MEADOWS, CHAIRMAN

December 14, 2009

Representative Meadows, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of public defense reform. I am glad that the committee is taking a serious look at this issue whose spotlight is long overdue.

My name is Matthew Kaley. I am the superintendent of the Muskegon County Juvenile Detention Center and the president of the Michigan Juvenile Detention Association. Our organization is composed of 26 different Juvenile Detention agencies of varying sizes all over the state of Michigan and we are a member of the Campaign for Justice coalition. The Michigan Juvenile Detention Association is committed to the highest standard of professional ethics, overall excellence in the care and custody of youth, and the provision of services to their families.

I am also an Adjunct Professor in Criminal Justice at Muskegon Community College and a former probation officer and have held other roles in the juvenile justice system. I have seen the “ins and outs” of the juvenile system and I can say that I’ve seen the need for reform of our state’s public defense system. Public defense attorneys could play a larger role in working with their child clients in identifying cost effective solutions and alternatives to incarceration.

The end goal of the system needs to be increasing their positive behaviors and decreasing their negative behaviors. With so many children having mental health or substance abuse issues, it is clear to me and many of my counterparts that treatment and the provision of essential services that address those problems is critical. Sometimes defense attorneys only talk to the children a few minutes before court hearings, and usually in crowded hallways. If a defense attorney doesn’t know or have the resources or time to investigate to find out that a child is facing one of those problems, he or she won’t know

how best to advocate for their young clients. This has become a problem given the lack of consistent training for attorneys regarding juvenile defense along with mental health issues.

The reality is that our state's public defense system is failing not just adults, but children. In addition, the cost to taxpayers is enormous. A system with no standards or monitoring of defense services can barely be called a system at all; instead, we have a hodgepodge of different counties, cities, courts, all delivering public defense differently and not in the most effective way possible. Also, if we have a more effective public defense system, we'll be able to save money in the long run with respect to decreased recidivism, especially with children as they become adults, cost of incarceration, and the cost of lawsuits, appeals, and more. We need a system that is cost effective. The Michigan Juvenile Detention Association supports reform of our state's public defense representation system and we hope that you will take the time to carefully consider this issue and support reform legislation as well.

Thank you for your consideration and for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Matthew J. Kaley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Matthew" and last name "Kaley" clearly distinguishable.

Matthew J. Kaley
President
Michigan Juvenile Detention Association